

November 7, 1991

Lifestyles

Cancer-Treatments

With Sherbrooke AM-Naessens; UNDATED QuickFacts

By Maxine Ruvinsky

Montreal (CP)

For years, critics of orthodox cancer treatments have charged that a multi-billion-dollar cancer industry suppresses alternative therapies.

Many believe the controversy owes its persistence to the "failure" of orthodox treatments. "What's fuelling the whole debate is that orthodox methods have failed miserably . . . in terms of treatment, it's a stalemate situation at best," said Ralph Moss, author of *The Cancer Industry*, and former assistant director of public affairs for the Memorial Sloan-Kettering cancer centre in New York.

"After all, you don't see too many unorthodox treatments for polio."

Many alternative therapies are based on strengthening the body's immune system rather than destroying malignant tissue. They are sometimes used in Mexico, the Bahamas, and alternative clinics in the United States.

However, radiation, chemotherapy and surgery remain the only "proven" treatments and the only ones covered under government and private health-care insurance plans.

"With chemotherapies, which are given to the vast majority of people with cancer, we clearly have no evidence of survival benefit for 80 per cent of people taking them," said Frank Wiewel, executive director of People Against Cancer.

"Chemotherapy is the snake oil of the 90s," said Wiewel, whose Iowa-based patient advocate group distributes information about alternative treatments to thousands of members around the world.

"It is for all practical purposes an unproven therapy used for profit—the U.S. Senate's own definition of quackery."

"That's incredible," said Dr. Jack Laidlaw, medical director of the Canadian Cancer Society, referring to Wiewel's assessment of chemotherapy as quackery.

"I don't have in my head the information which would tell me if the 80-per-cent figure is correct, but I'd be very surprised if the situation were that bad."

Laidlaw said chemotherapy has proved highly effective against some cancers, including testicular, Hodgkin's (cancer of the lymph glands) and acute childhood leukemia, which today has a five-year survival rate of 73 per cent compared with five per cent in the 1960s.

Yet even some mainstream medical practitioners concede traditional treatments have not been as successful as hoped in treating all patients

diagnosed with the more common cancers, among them lung, colon, breast and prostate.

Overall cancer statistics paint a grim picture: 50 per cent of patients won't survive beyond five years, said Laidlaw, noting that "cancer is increasing faster than any other disease," with 110,000 new cases a year in Canada.

But Laidlaw doesn't believe alternative therapies are suppressed. "I have no evidence that that's so in Canada. . . . And I can't believe the same isn't true in the States.

"It's very rare that people touting these new kind of therapies are studying them in ways recognized by authorities."

But obtaining government approval for a new drug is a lengthy and costly process—taking up to 10 years and costing between \$200 million and \$500 million.

"It's all based on an evaluation procedure that can only be undertaken by (the largest) five or six pharmaceutical companies (in the United States)," Wiewel said.

Meanwhile, numerous alternatives languish untested on the American Cancer Society's Unproven Methods of Cancer Management list.

Case study evidence citing the effectiveness of alternative therapies is often rejected as "anecdotal."

"When you hear about an unproven treatment, all that could mean—and usually does mean—is that no one has attempted to prove it," said Harris Coulter, an expert and author on alternative medicine. "So it's a self-fulfilling prophecy: no one will ever get the money to test them."

Some critics say the public is misled by selectively cited statistics that underplay the failures of orthodox treatments.

Epidemiologist John Bailar, formerly with the National Cancer Institute in Washington and now with McGill University, says the statistics "from NCI and other official agencies are accurate.

"The problem is they're used selectively by people who have a stake in coming to one or another conclusion."

Bailar, former editor of the NCI's professional journal, still advocates "the earliest possible conventional treatment. There is no doubt that there has been major progress against certain kinds of cancer.

"At the same time, there have been some real losses—the death rates and incidence rates are going up."

He believes that despite billions of dollars spent over decades seeking a cure, the war on cancer has been lost.

"For a long time we believed treatment was the way to solve this problem; it hasn't worked," he said.

"It's time to take a whole new approach—and start getting serious about prevention."

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Naessens  
With Montreal AM-Cancer-Treatments  
By Maxine Ruvinsky

Sherbrooke, Que. (CP)

Independent microbiologist Gaston Naessens invites a visitor to look through the microscope at a specimen of live blood and observe the entity he christened the somatid.

Vibrating furiously, the somatids look like diamonds on a sun-lit sea. They are present, Naessens explains, in the blood of all animals and humans.

It was his invention, 40 years ago, of the somatoscope—called a “a remarkable advancement in light microscopy” by Rolf Wieland, [deleted: senior microscopy expert] of the German optics firm Carl Zeiss—that led the French-born Naessens to develop what he hopes will become a recognized blood test for cancer.

Over the years Naessens observed the somatid, documenting its 16 forms and relating them to disease. The somatid in its first three forms is present in healthy blood, he says. The remaining 13 forms indicate disease, he believes, up to two years before the onset of any symptoms.

In 1976, he developed 714X, an alternative treatment for cancer and other degenerative diseases, such as AIDS and multiple sclerosis.

“It builds up the immune system so that all the body’s natural defences can regain the upper hand,” Naessens said.

#### THOUSANDS TREATED

Since 1976, more than 5,000 people worldwide have been treated with 714X, which contains natural camphor, nitrogen and mineral salts, and is injected into the lymph region in the groin, he said.

In his book *The Persecution and Trial of Gaston Naessens*, author Christopher Bird says the compound has “in over 75 per cent of cases, restabilized, strengthened or otherwise enhanced the powers of the immune system, which then goes about its normal business of ridding the body of disease.”

In 1989, a court acquitted Naessens of charges of criminal negligence contributing to the death of a terminal cancer patient treated with 714X.

On lesser charges of practising medicine illegally, brought against him by the Quebec College of Physicians, Naessens pleaded guilty and was fined.

Since his acquittal, 714X has been available through Health and Welfare Canada’s emergency drug release program, under which a physician requests the experimental product and assumes responsibility for results.

JoAnne Ford, a communications officer for the Health Department, said about 80 doctors have requested 714X, which Naessens produces at his Sherbrooke laboratory and provides free of charge.

Yet the compound remains mired in controversy.

"We don't talk to the press about 714X," said a Health and Welfare official.

The Quebec medical college—facing defamation charges brought by Naessens in a suit expected to be heard next year—warns member doctors against using it.

But those who use 714X say they see results.

"We found that in every case there's some progress," said Jacinte Levesque, a naturopath who runs a Montreal-area alternative medicine clinic where she has treated 15 patients, mostly for cancer and AIDS, with 714X.

Levesque said "it's only case study evidence" but patients "are more peppy, they eat better and sleep better."

"Is it only the 714X?"

"We don't know, but we know we see people feeling better—and gaining weight rather than losing it."

Micheline Lacaille said doctors had given up on her 16-year-old daughter Sophie-Kim, diagnosed with terminal leukemia. Sophie-Kim was treated for five months with 714X beginning in January 1990 and began to recover, Lacaille said.

Facing a setback about a year later, she was again treated with 714X, this time in conjunction with chemotherapy, and showed positive results.

"Everyone (at the Montreal Children's Hospital) knew Sophie-Kim was on 714X—I made sure of that," Lacaille said in an interview.

Sophie-Kim remains free of cancer, Lacaille said, adding that practitioners of orthodox and alternative medicine could work together.

"The problem is, they don't."

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## QUICKFACTS

The following briefly describes five of the best-known practitioners of unorthodox cancer therapies in the last several decades. The therapies, among the 70 included in the American Cancer Society's list of unproven methods, remain controversial and the subject of ongoing legal battles to provide or prevent access to them.

Lawrence Burton, PhD - Immuno-Augmentative Therapy (IAT), an immune enhancing serum developed from Burton's original discovery in the 1950s of a tumor-inhibiting factor extracted from the larvae of fruit flies. Burton left the U.S. in 1977 and operates a clinic in Freeport, Grand Bahamas.

Stanislaw Burzynski, MD, PhD - Antineoplaston therapy, a cancer-inhibiting chemical derived from urinary peptides. (Peptides are small chains of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins.) Operates a clinic in Houston, Texas.

Max B. Gerson, MD - Elaborate dietary regimen (including liver juice) and detoxification program (involving coffee enemas). Gerson treated Albert Schweitzer, who called him "an eminent medical genius." Gerson clinic continues operation in Tijuana, Mexico, since his death in 1959.

Harry M. Hoxsey - The Hoxsey herbal method, employing herbal remedies for external and internal use. Clinics banned in the U.S. in 1960. Hoxsey died in 1974. Tijuana clinic run by his longtime chief nurse Mildred Cates (Nelson), RN.

Virginia Livingston Wheeler, MD - Immunological therapy based on her theories about the possible microbial origin of cancer, coupled with dietary regimen and vaccine. Livingston Wheeler operates a medical clinic in San Diego, California.

Gaston Naessens - Inventor of somatoscope, a microscope using ultraviolet and laser beam technology, which can examine living blood for evidence of degenerative disease up to two years before the onset of symptoms. At his laboratory near Sherbrooke, Que., produces 714X, an injectable non-toxic liquid that strengthens the immune system.

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